



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
OFFICE OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND BUSINESS REGULATION

**DEPARTMENT OF  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS & ENERGY  
Cable Television Division**

**CONSUMER BULLETIN**

Severe Storm Facts

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Storms in New England frequently present two major problems for cable television subscribers in Massachusetts. First, many cable lines can come down resulting in thousands of subscribers without cable service. Second, if the storm is severe and communities lose electricity, subscribers will be unable to access cable service even if the cable operator's lines are unaffected by the storm.

This Bulletin is to remind consumers and cable operators of their rights and responsibilities under Massachusetts law. Chapter 166A, Section 5(1) of Massachusetts General Laws requires cable operators to grant subscribers a pro-rated credit or rebate for service interrupted for 24 or more consecutive hours. Also, even if an entire tier of cable service is out for 24 hours—but not the whole service—the operator must still grant the credit.

Cable subscribers should be aware that after a storm, cable operators make every effort to restore service in their territories as soon as possible. When cable service has been restored, cable subscribers whose electricity is still on will have cable programming available immediately while communities without electricity must wait for electrical service to be restored before their cable programs can be accessed.

Severe storms are almost always widely publicized in the media and cable operators have extra crews working to restore service. At such times, consumers who are without service because of the storm do not need to call their cable operator. However, consumers should call their cable operator immediately if they observe a cable line that has fallen down as a result of the storm. In no case should a consumer touch a down wire.

**A CONSUMER SHOULD NEVER TOUCH A FALLEN WIRE, AS IT MAY BE A  
LIVE ELECTRICAL WIRE OR CONNECTED TO LIVE POWER.**